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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: FEBRUARY 17, 2009

Summary: Reports on the joint declaration of a "Sharia-based judicial system for Malakand (Swat) and Kohistan" following an agreement between the NWFP government and the Tehrik Nifaz-i-Shariat Muhammadi (TNSM) dominated all front pages on Tuesday. Newspapers also front-paged Information Minister Sherry Rehman's remarks that "President Zardari will not endorse Malakand Pact until peace restored" in Swat valley. Reports on the "first ever drone attack in Kurram tribal region killing 26 suspected militants" received extensive coverage in all newspapers. Several major dailies highlighted U.S. Special Envoy Holbrooke's statement that an "Islamic militancy in Pakistan's Swat region is a common threat to the U.S., India and Pakistan." All newspapers reported former President Musharraf's remarks that a "conspiracy was being hatched to weaken Pakistan by launching a 'malicious campaign' against the (Pakistan) Army and the ISI."

Most newspapers ran editorials on the implications of the recent declaration of "Sharia-based judicial system" in the insurgency-hit Swat valley and the adjacent areas. Criticizing the move, the independent English daily, "Dawn," noted that "such drives end up being superficial, making crimes out of 'sin,' targeting popular culture, purging society of 'western' influence, and leaving untouched the main issue of providing justice to the common man." Similarly, the centrist national daily, "The News," lamented that "this deal shows that the Pakistan military has in fact been defeated by the militants; that we are now incapable of retaining control of vast tracts of our own territory." Conversely, the center-right nationalist daily, "Nawa-i-Waqt," opined that the "U.S. policy to use force has turned Swat into hell after the tribal areas and this policy has led to terrorism in other parts of Pakistan. This is why we should not listen to the hue and cry raised against this agreement by America and its local cohorts." The Islamabad-based daily, "Pakistan Observer," observed that "it is regrettable that some people adopted violent means for realization of such a highly noble objective, which is apparently in direct conflict with the teachings of Islam." End Summary.

News Stories

"Shariah-Based System Tied To Peace In Swat" "Dawn" (02/17)

"NWFP Chief Minister Ameer Haider Hoti announced a Shariah-based judicial system for Malakand and Kohistan on Monday, but denied that the proposed system was similar to the one introduced by Taliban in Afghanistan. The Chief Minister linked the enforcement of the system with restoration of peace and resumption of proper

functioning of state institutions in Swat."

"Deal Linked With Peace In Swat" "The Nation" (02/17)

"In a press release issued in Islamabad on Monday, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Sherry Rehman has said that President Zardari will approve the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation after the restoration of peace in Swat region."

"Malakand Accord Step In Right Direction: PM" "Dawn" (02/17)

"Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani said on Monday that the accord on enforcing Nizam-e-Adl Regulation in Malakand was a step in the right direction which would pave way for restoration of peace in Swat. After that troops would be pulled out of the valley, he said, while talking to reporters in Islamabad."

"Army To Obey Deal Between NWFP Govt., TNSM: ISPR" "Daily Times" (02/17)

"The Pakistan army will abide by the deal between the NWFP government and the Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat Muhammadi (TNSM), Inter-Service Public Relations spokesman Major General Athar Abbas said on Monday. Talking to a private TV channel, Athar said the military had been asked to back off, but it would only respond if attacked."

"U.S. Monitoring Swat Peace Deal" "The Nation" (02/17)

"U.S. special envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke has said the United States is closely monitoring the peace deal and Shariah imposition in Pakistan's northwestern districts, apparently aimed at pacifying a spreading Taliban insurgency in the region."

"Australia Hails Swat Deal" "The News" (02/17)

"Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith on Monday welcomed the Swat Agreement as a positive development, saying problems cannot be resolved through military means alone. Addressing a joint news conference along with Foreign Minister Mahmood Qureshi in Islamabad, Smith said there was also a need to pursue dialogue and development as part of the counter-terrorism strategy."

"Malakand Peace Deal Gets Broad Political Support" "Dawn" (02/17)

"Leaders of most political parties and Tehrik Nifaz-i-Shariat Muhammadi on Monday extended their support to the NWFP government's decision to enforce Islamic system in Malakand and restore peace in the region."

"Religio-Political Parties Back Nizam-e-Adl" "The News" (02/17)

"Except Jamaat-e-Islami, all other political and religious parties and public representatives from Malakand Division participated in the consultative meeting (Jirga) held at Chief Minister's House about Nizam-e-Adl Regulation on Tuesday and appreciated the move as a step towards peace in the volatile Swat valley."

"Govt.-TNSM Deal A High Risk Affair" "The News" (02/17)

"Islamabad's decision to sign a peace deal with the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariaht-e-Muhammadi by enforcing the 'Sharai Nizam-e-Adl Regulation' in the Malakand division of the NWFP, primarily to bring back peace to the Swat valley, is a highly risky affair for both Maulana Sufi Mohammad and the government since both sides have put their credibility at stake and will have to prove in the coming days that they are capable of honoring their part of the treaty unlike the past."

"TTP Welcomes Shariah Regulation" "The News" (02/17)

"Welcoming the draft of the Shariah Regulation, the Taliban leaders on Monday expressed the confidence that the government would implement it in letter and spirit."

"Swatis Are Flying High As West Is At A Loss" "The News" (02/17)

"People in Swat and rest of Malakand division heaved a sigh of

relief and expressed happiness following the announcement that Nizam-e-Adl Regulation was being enforced in their area but in keeping with expectations the Western capitals appear apprehensive and their media is critical of the decision."

"First Drone Attack In Kurram Agency Kills 26; Most Of The Dead Were Afghan Nationals" "The News" (02/17)

"The U.S. spy planes on Monday carried out first ever attack in Kurram tribal region, killing 26 suspected militants and seriously injuring several others, official sources said."

"Pakistan, India And U.S. Are In The Same Boat: Holbrooke" "The News" (02/17)

"An Islamist militancy in Pakistan's Swat region is a common threat to the United States, India and Pakistan, a special U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke said on Monday, after meeting India's Foreign Minister and top security officials."

"Mischief Afoot Against Army, ISI, Says Musharraf" "Dawn" (02/17)

"Denouncing claims that he secretly supported the Taliban during his days in power, former President Gen. (R) Pervez Musharraf said on Monday that a conspiracy was being hatched to weaken Pakistan by launching a 'malicious campaign' against the Army and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)."

"Official Account Of How U.S. Bugged Pak Generals" "The News" (02/16)

"A new book by a New York Times journalist has leveled serious allegations against Pakistan and its Army claiming the telephones of all senior officers, including the COAS General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani were bugged by Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and National Security Agency (NSA), the main eavesdropping U.S. agencies around the world. The book written by David E Sanger, which has hit the stands a few days back, claims that the American intelligence agencies were intercepting telephonic conversations of Army officers and the decision to attack Pakistan through drones was taken after one such high level conversation was intercepted claiming the Taliban as a 'strategic asset' for Pakistan. The book, titled 'The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts and the challenges to American power' claims the decision to invade Pakistani territories was taken after the CIA reached a conclusion that the ISI was absolutely in complete coordination with the Taliban."

"No Link Between Military, Militants: FM" "The Post" (02/17)

"Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has denied link between Pakistan army and militants saying there are certain elements outside who want to create differences between Pakistan army and government, he said this in an exclusive chat with CNN."

"Military Claims Killing Five Militants In Bajaur" "The New" (02/17)

"Amid speculations of a possible peace agreement between the government and the militants affiliated with the banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Bajaur Agency chapter, security forces claimed to have killed five insurgents and injured several others during shelling by jetfighters in various parts of the troubled tribal region."

"U.S., U.K. Anti-Terror Tactics Undermined Int'l Law: ICJ" "The Nation" (02/17)

"The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) on Monday in its most extensive studies of counter-terrorism and human rights said that the U.K. and the U.S. in the past seven years have 'actively undermined' international law in the way they fight terrorism."

"India Hikes Defense Budget By 35 Per Cent" "The New" (02/17)

"India has increased its defence budget by 35 per cent in the next fiscal (2009-10) as compared with the last year's defence budget, citing changed security environment after the Mumbai attacks, pumping in an additional amount of Rs 361 billion."

"CIA Helped Pakistan, India On 26/11" "The Nation" (02/17)

"The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency helped arrange back-channel intelligence exchanges between India and Pakistan in the wake of the Mumbai attacks in order to avoid conflict between the two nations, The Washington Post reported Monday."

"Cotton Lab Closed On U.S. Demand" "Dawn" (02/17)

"Pakistan has closed down the country's oldest and biggest cotton laboratory in Karachi after a request by the United States, which plans to house a part of its Consulate there, Agriculture Secretary Ziaur Rehman told the Public Accounts Committee on Monday in Islamabad."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Shariah Nizam-e-Adl," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (02/17)

"The latest Shariah Nizam-e-Adl regulation that is to be imposed in the Malakand region will neither address the people's demand for justice nor help in defeating the militants. Informed debate on the issue has been hampered by the complex legal and political history of the area which is often not fully understood. But experience tells us that such drives end up being superficial, making crimes out of 'sin,' targeting popular culture, purging society of 'western' influence, and leaving untouched the main issue of providing justice to the common man."

"Shariah In Swat," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/17)

"The fact is that this deal shows that the Pakistan military has in fact been defeated by the militants; that we are now incapable of retaining control of vast tracts of our own territory. This has implications for other parts of the country, where militants hold sway. The day may come when a decision is made to strike deals there too - and by doing so allow the militants to seize control of a people whose government no longer seems able to protect them or safeguard their rights as citizens."

"Shariah Implementation In Malakand; The Duty Of The Provincial And Federal Governments And Taliban Leadership," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (02/17)

"America would surely be wary of enforcement of Shariah and oppose agreement with those who are devout Muslims.... The first ever U.S. predator drone attack on Kurram Agency is a bid to open up a new front.... The U.S. policy to use force has turned Swat into hell after the tribal areas and this policy has led to terrorism in other parts of Pakistan. This is why we should not listen to the hue and cry raised against this agreement by America and its local cohorts."

"Enforcement Of Shariah In Malakand," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (02/17)

"It is, however, regrettable that some people adopted violent means for realization of such a highly noble objective, which is apparently in direct conflict with the teachings of Islam that calls for promotion of peace, brotherhood, tolerance. Anyhow, the new arrangement can lead to durable peace in the troubled region and, therefore, needs to be implemented in letter and in spirit."

"Swat Agreement," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (02/17)

"There is a need to hold talks with all militant groups who are willing to accept the supremacy of the Constitution and the writ of the state. It would be a bad practice, however, if a parallel legal system was to be introduced in a part of the country, over and above Parliament. The agreement needs to be brought before the National Assembly for debate."

"Swat Sharia And Taliban," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/17)

"We fervently hope that Shariah in Swat brings peace as well as justice to the benighted population of the valley. But the bottom line, which no student of political science in the world will deny, is that a state of justice cannot exist without a proper writ of the state. It is the obligation of the state of Pakistan to re-establish its writ in the region before people can taste the fruit of justice."

"Shariah Accord," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (02/17)

"Some critics of the accord fear that the U.S. may object to it, terming it a concession to the extremists.... This time the U.S. cannot object if through minor changes in the judicial system, violence can be controlled and army can be diverted to fighting the war against terrorism."

"Implementation Of Agreement - Responsibilities Of Both Parties," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (02/17)

"Following the enforcement of Islamic laws in Swat valley, if Taliban do not discard their persistence to form a parallel administration and to establish their writ in the area, there is likelihood that the agreement between the government and Taliban will not prove productive. Indeed, in principle no one can disagree to the idea of implementation of Islamic laws, but the scheme of challenging the writ of the government and establishing a state within a state is not consistent with the national interest, independence, and security."

"Agreement On Islamic Laws In Swat Must Be Implemented In Letter And Spirit," an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (02/17)

"There is no credence to the criticism of some analysts and critics that two parallel system cannot go side by side in a country. In fact there are several systems prevalent in Pakistan at the moment. Therefore, there is no reason to oppose the idea of Islamic laws in Swat valley."

"Swat: Deal Between The Taliban And The Provincial Government," an editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (02/17)

"All sensitive citizens of Pakistan are thankful to Maulana Sufi Muhammad for his decision to stop the bloodletting in Swat and convince the parties to hold talks for peace. His courageous decision seems to be the source to restore peace in Swat.... The government should also open heartedly go for political dialogue in the tribal areas."

"Nizam-e-Adl Regulation: A Ray Of Hope For Peace," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 100,000) (02/17)

"This deal proves that the government is sincere in establishing peace in the country. It is important at this point that the two parties do not allow any miscreant to sabotage the deal. Implementation of the Malakand peace deal is in everyone's interest."

"Enforcement of Shariat In Malakand: Deal Between Taliban And Government," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (02/17)

"When the people of that area want the implementation of Shariah, there should be no hurdle in its way. At the same time, the Taliban must also not destroy girls schools. However, the real situation will be clear once the deal is implemented and produces some results."

"Islamic System Of Justice And Test Of Both Parties," an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (02/17)

"The agreement between the government and the Tehrik Nifaz Shariat Muhammadi (TNSM) and the announcement of ten-day ceasefire are commendable and positive steps towards establishment of peace in the area. However, everyone is praying that this agreement should not meet the same fate that the agreements in the past met."

"Ceasefire In Swat And Peace Talks: An Appropriate Step," an editorial in the Lahore-based Urdu daily "Waqt" (circ. 5000) (02/17)

"Circumstances demand that we keep in mind the past events and ponder why the similar ANP-Taliban deals failed in the past so that there are no fears of the latest peace talks' failure."

"Agreement With Taliban And U.S. Policy," an editorial in Hyderabad based independent and liberal Sindhi Daily "Kawish" (Cir. 105,000) (02/17)

"We neither say that Sharia-based judicial system should not be implemented in any part of the country, nor we suggest that government should not make peace deals with anyone. What we believe is that such agreements are the outcome of the policy that needs to be changed. Pakistan that was waging war against terror has itself become a victim of terror."

"Impose Sharia-Based System In Whole Country," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-right sensationalist Urdu daily "Ummat" (cir. 33,000) (02/17)

"The Sharia-based justice system is a demand of not only of the Malakand Division, but also of the entire country. People across the country have welcomed this move. There are apprehensions that the anti-Sharia elements will beyond doubt oppose this system. It is also quite obvious that the U.S. will not like this deal. May God bless this agreement, so that Swat may become a 'haven-on-earth' again for the people of Pakistan."

"This Peace Agreement Should Succeed," an editorial in Karachi based left-wing Sindhi Daily "Awami Awaz" (Cir. 70,000) (02/17)

"Peace agreements with the local Taliban in the past have failed to bring in any substantial change, or establish peace in the area. Therefore, it is quite normal that everyone fears that the latest deal may also not meet with the same fate."

"Nazam-e-Adl: What Next For The Taliban," an op-ed by Asad Munir in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (02/17)

"Negotiations with terrorists should be held on a two-point agenda: that they surrender and lay down their arms and that their leaders give an undertaking that they will not run a parallel administration and not interfere in the state's domain. If these conditions are accepted, and a monitoring system put in place confirms that they are being adhered to then a general amnesty to those not involved in heinous crimes could be considered."

"Drone Sorties From Islamabad - A Question Mark For Government," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (02/17)

"Government of Pakistan has neither confirmed nor denied the statement of the U.S. Senator Feinstein that the U.S. drones fly from within Pakistani territory.... It is important to take the Pakistani nation into confidence on this issue to end more complication and turmoil in the country."

"Mike Mullen's Analysis," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (02/17)

"Admiral Mike Mullen in his Washington Post article has tried to give guideline to Obama administration. However, if the new foreign policy was formulated in keeping with Admiral Mullen's approach then existing complications are bound to increase.... Pakistanis and Pakistani military do not trust America due to its hypocritical policy vis-à-vis our country. It is not because, as the Admiral

claimed, the personnel of Pakistan Army do not know America."

"U.S. Intelligence Agencies Want To Prove That Pakistan Army Is Weak,?" an editorial in the Lahore-based independent Urdu daily "Din" (circ. 5000) (02/17)

"David E. Sanger's book, which recently hit the stands, claims that U.S. intelligence agencies were tapping Pakistani Army officials phone calls. It could be Pakistan's compulsion to warmly welcome U.S. authorities and members of the media, but giving these people access to important persons and institutions is no compulsion at all.... We are in a state of war right now, and victory in a war depends largely on keeping one's plans under wraps. Pakistan must discuss the issue of surveillance with American friends and must adopt a strategy to counter the negative effects created by this report."

"War For Peace?," an op-ed by Rasul Bakhsh Rais in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (02/17)

"Two things are important, not for war, but for securing peace: national reconciliation within Afghanistan by bringing the Taliban into the political process; and promoting a regional approach to settling issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan and between Pakistan and India. Building peace is harder than fighting wars. Until we take the difficult road to peace, the usual cycle of war in Afghanistan will continue, and the objective of peace and security in Afghanistan and the region will remain distant."

"Mumbai Attacks Investigation: India Needs To Cooperate With Pakistan," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir.100,000) (02/17)

"India has tried its best to allege that the Pakistani state was involved in the Mumbai attacks whereas the world knows it was non-state actors. The Indian leadership needs to answer who was involved on the Indian side. India needs to cooperate with Pakistan if it is sincere in the investigation."
Patterson